

Street crime unit suspended

Woman claims she was sexually harassed during drug arrest

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GREENBURGH — Greenburgh police have suspended operations of their street crime unit after a woman arrested on marijuana charges claimed that she was subjected to sexual ridicule by police.

Police Chief John Kapica took the step Wednesday and confirmed yesterday that authorities are investigating allegations that "police officers performed in a manner that was less than professional."

No disciplinary action has been taken against any member of the department, and street-crime officers have been reassigned to patrol, Kapica said.

Street crime officers arrested

the 31-year-old woman Jan. 21 in the parking lot of the Greenburgh Multiplex movie theaters on Saw Mill River Road. She was taken to headquarters and charged with fifth-degree criminal possession of marijuana and driving while ability impaired by drugs, both misdemeanors. The alleged behavior occurred while she was in the booking room at headquarters and when she was given a court date and released.

The woman's lawyer is Tony Castro, who ran unsuccessfully for district attorney last year and in 2001. Castro declined to comment about the case, but confirmed that his client had made a complaint and that it was being investigated by town police and Westchester prosecutors.

Lucian Chalfen, a spokesman for the District Attorney's Office, confirmed that the public integrity bureau is investigating the case but would not comment further.

The street-crime unit is a six-

member team of plainclothes officers headed by Sgt. Richard Conroy. They are involved in several areas of crime prevention and apprehension and routinely stake out shopping center parking lots to combat car break-ins and target shoplifting at local stores. They also fight street-level drug activity through undercover buys and surveillance operations.

Conroy was not on duty at the time of the arrest, and Kapica said the allegations of unprofessional behavior involved street crime officers, as well as officers who were on duty at headquarters at the time. He refused to discuss details of the allegations, saying it would hamper the ongoing investigation.

Kapica said that the suspension of street-crime operations was temporary and that no significant investigations were being interrupted.

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